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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The funeral and associated traditional mourning customs for President Deby's son tied up key players in Ndjamena, with the result that the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD) still does not have Chadian approval for a flight to take Darfur rebels to Mombasa. CHD is focusing its efforts on flying field officers from the splinter groups of the SLM to Mombasa, while keeping in close contact with the external political leaders and hoping to rope them in as well. CHD sees JEM and other groups as less important. A local JEM official told us that JEM continues to endorse the effort to pull the SLM together but does not predict success.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) CHD's Theo Murphy was in Chad for several days attempting to get Chadian approval for SLM field officers to travel from Darfur to Abeche and for an aircraft to pick them up in Abeche to take them to the CHD-organized conference in Mombasa. The timing was difficult because President Deby and his senior leadership have been traveling (AU summit) or consumed with the funeral for Deby's eldest son Brahim (murdered July 2 in France, buried July 4 in Ndjamena, with Qadhafi and CAR's President Bozize in attendance). Murphy was armed with a request (or at least acquiescence) from the UN/AU. He expects the approval to be forthcoming as soon as the higher-ups in Chad have a moment to spare. (Comment: Alternatively, CHD is being given a polite brush-off. We should know within a few days. Even with tepid UN/AU cover, there remain factors that could give the Chadians cold feet about CHD's transporting Darfurian rebels across Chad: to wit, worries about Libya, Sudan, and Eritrea. End Comment.)

¶3. (SBU) In a meeting with Ambassador Wall July 2, and subsequently in conversations with poloff, Murphy provided his read-out on alignments within the much-splintered SLM. On July 3, JEM's representative in Ndjamena Tajaddin Niam and a former SLM heavyweight, Adam Bakhit, separately called on the Ambassador to say farewell, and added a few insights.

CHD Analysis of SLM

¶4. (SBU) Murphy, who spent three weeks among the rebels in Darfur and is in constant telephonic contact with them, broke down the SLM rebels roughly into five groups. Any categorization of SLM rebels was artificial, he said, because allegiances were fluid and leaders' power waxed or waned quickly. There was a trend toward ethnic polarization, with the Zaghawans flocking to one side and other ethnicities defining themselves in opposition to the Zaghawans. CHD's objective was to work from the field commanders "up" rather than from the external leaders "down," as the field commanders were closer to realities on the ground and were

more amenable to compromise. However, the effort in Um Rai (in rebel territory) to heal the SLM divisions, an effort that was entirely field-based, failed because, among other reasons, it did not adequately take the external leaders into consideration -- so CHD was not going to make that mistake. Murphy said he had started with Abd al-Wahid al-Nur's fighters in western Jabal Marra, got them on board, then got the rest of the fighters on board. The hard part, ever since, had been the external leaders and waffling UN/AU leadership. The fighters are ready to get on the plane.

15. (SBU) According to Murphy, by far the most important SLM group at present, in terms of fighting men on the ground, is the Zaghawan force in northern Darfur (sometimes known as SLM-Unity) commanded by Abdallah Yahya. This group, Murphy said, is strong in the field but weak in political leadership. Sharif Harir, a Zaghawan professor in Norway, had gravitated recently toward Abdallah Yahya and aspired to this political leadership but had proved to be a divisive figure at Um Rai. (Murphy preferred that Sharif Harir not come to Mombasa.) Another Zaghawan would-be leader, Adam Ali Shoggar, had now joined Abdallah Yahya in the field. Murphy said that the true political leader of this group should be Sulayman Jammous, an older figure revered among Darfurians. However, Sulayman Jammous was confined by the UN in Kadugli, where he had been taken for medical treatment. Meanwhile, Murphy said, Abdallah Yahya had traveled to Asmara and now been for some weeks in Tripoli, waiting for a check from Qadhafi (Abdallah Yahya had told Murphy by telephone that the Libyans were not holding him but that he was "waiting" -- which in the Qadhafi context, Murphy assumed, meant waiting for money). Murphy worried that Abdallah Yahya was a political neophyte and, as the weeks lengthened in Asmara and Tripoli, he was losing touch with the field. Meanwhile, Sharif Harir had been holding in Asmara.

16. (SBU) The Fur, Murphy said, were split in two directions

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by Fur external leaders Abd al-Wahid al-Nur (in Europe) and Ahmad Abd al-Shafi (in Kampala). Abd al-Wahid had a more significant fighting force (western Jabal Marra) and greater popular following than Abd al-Shafi (small force southeast of Jabal Marra). Abd al-Shafi was working with Fur elder statesman Ahmad Ibrahim Diraij in London to build a Darfur-wide following. It seemed likely that Abd al-Wahid and Abd al-Shafi, now intense rivals, would not both show up in Mombasa. A fourth grouping was led by Khamis Abdallah Abakar, a Masalit who had holed up in Ndjamena and boycotted Um Rai. He has a small force on the Chadian border near Adre. Khamis Abdallah had been in Asmara in recent weeks and was finding it difficult to get an exit visa (effectively held there against his will). Finally, Murphy discerned a fifth grouping, which had a significant non-Zaghawan force in the northern area but not an announced leader. The most significant personage in this group, "the unannounced leader," was Sulayman Marajan (from the Maidob). A Zaghawan, Jar al-Nabi, was also noteworthy in this grouping.

17. (SBU) Murphy said that he had been in continual contact with non-SLM groups, including the JEM, NMRD, and Arab rebels. CHD's inclination was not to invite them now to Mombasa, even as observers, but to "keep it organic," wait to see if the conference was moving in the right direction, and perhaps bring them in later. He characterized the JEM as a significant player, with "some" fighters on the ground, near the Chadian border at Tine. He saw the NMRD, which split off from JEM in 2004, as, effectively, a Chadian creation, operating only in Chad, with Chadian weapons; many of the NMRD fighters, he believed, had filtered back into Darfur to join Abdallah Yahya. The Arab rebels, who now give themselves the name URFF (United Revolutionary Force Front), he believed to be a minor element. The URFF and NMRD share an office in Ndjamena and claim to have an alliance with Khamis Abdallah.

¶8. (SBU) When JEM's Tajaddin Niam called on the Ambassador July 2 to bid farewell, he emphasized, as he had in his June 20 meeting with the Ambassador (reftel), the importance of unifying SLM ranks and getting on with political resolution of the Darfur conflict. JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim was "in the field" (Darfur) and JEM vice president Bahar Idriss Abu Garda and JEM "foreign minister" Ahmad Togoud were still in Tripoli. Tajaddin said he was keeping a low profile in Ndjamena -- he believed Deby would not ask him to leave if he lay low. He anticipated going to Mombasa with a small JEM team as observers. He thought that success at the CHD conference would be difficult to achieve but that it was essential to try.

¶9. (SBU) Tajaddin saw Abd al-Shafi's cosying up to Diraij as the beginning of yet another wedge in the SLM. Abd al-Wahid was in Paris shouting that he was the SLM leader, while Sharif Harir, "under civil detention in Asmara" (with Khamis Abdallah) was shouting the same. "At least when you are in Tripoli you are free to leave." Tajaddin saw the hand of Sudan in these SLM divisions. Something that so directly served the Sudanese government's interests must be concocted by it. The result, he said, was that the international community was now beginning to see the rebels as being as much a factor in the suffering of the Darfurian people as the government of Sudan was. Eritrea had also played a nefarious role in dividing the SLM. The trouble with the SLM was that, from the beginning, it had not had mature, experienced political leaders. John Garang had organized the SLM on a tribal basis, in contrast to the JEM, which from the beginning had been based on institutions and not personalities and tribes. The Ambassador pointed out that the top three personalities in the JEM were Zaghawan, as was Tajaddin, but Tajaddin claimed, in response, that most of JEM's officials below that level, and eight out of nine JEM heads of office in Europe, were not Zaghawan.

Adam Bakhit

¶10. (SBU) Adam Bakhit, a formerly important SLM commander who has milled around in Ndjamena for several months, also asked to pay farewell on the Ambassador July 2. He said that he was chief of staff to Khamis Abdallah, who, he said, was now chairman of the recently-formed SNRF (Sudanese National Redemption Front, not to be confused with the defunct National Redemption Front, which had been formed in June 2006 and had included JEM). Bakhit said that five groups had joined their forces in the SNRF and had now moved across the border into Sudanese territory near Tine: the SLM faction under Khamis Abdallah (Masalit), NMRD under Jibril Abd

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al-Karim (Zaghawan), URFF Arab group under its chairman al-Zubaydi (Ibrahim Ahmad Abdullah Ja'dallah, nicknamed al-Zubaydi) and chief of staff Yasin Yusuf Abd al-Rahman, a Kordofan group under Muhammad Bilayl, and a Kush group under Abd al-Majid Muhammad Durshab. He said that Adam Ali Shoggar had now teamed up with Khamis Abdallah -- that, in fact, he had left Shoggar "at the border" before coming to Ndjamena to see the Ambassador. He said he had just spoken to Abdallah Yahya in Tripoli and urged him not to sign any agreement there with Qadhafi protege Osman Bushra, a Darfur rebel who was always "playing Qadhafi's dirty games." He insinuated that Sudan was in the process of "buying off" JEM's Khalil Ibrahim, pursuing a strategy of dividing the rebels which would only ensure that the war continued indefinitely. He was highly critical of Sharif Harir, Ahmad Abd al-Shafi, and Abd al-Wahid al-Nur as each pursuing personal ambition at the expense of the Darfurian people.

¶11. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
WALL